



## Resource Guide for Families of Children with Disabilities/ Special Health Needs Planning to Move to Vermont

[Vermont Family Network](#) (VFN) empowers and supports all Vermont families of children with special needs. We are here to listen and help with any needs or concerns you may have related to you or your child's health, education or well-being. VFN is home for the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI), the Family-to-Family Health Information Center and Parent to Parent USA. Call us 802-876-5315 for more information about advocacy and leadership, disabilities or special health needs, early childhood development, general and special education, health care access, mental health, and transition to adulthood. Families who are considering a move to Vermont may want to join VFN's closed Facebook page - "Vermont Families of Children with Special Needs" or join our Listserv which is an email group. Contact VFN for instructions on joining these groups or for information about parent-led support groups.

Families of children and youth with special health care needs have much to consider when moving to a new state. Services and supports will differ from state to state. This Guide is intended to be a starting point and doesn't list every service available in Vermont. Your child may not be eligible for or need every service in this Guide.

Here are a few tips:

- It is unlikely the services that your child is currently receiving will be delivered in the same way once you move to Vermont.
- Each county in Vermont may have slightly different procedures and limitations on services.
- If you are flexible about what county you live in, you can compare services and systems.
- Before you move, contact the agencies you may need (most are provided in this Resource Guide) and ask to talk with a supervisor or manager from that program. Tell them your child's diagnosis and support needs. Ask all of the questions you have, take good notes and write down the name of the person you talked to. With this information, it will be easier to hit the ground running when you arrive. Services will not begin until you have officially moved to Vermont.
- For additional information and helpful tips about moving, visit the [Q&A from the Parent Center Hub](#).
- Check out some [fun things to do in Vermont](#).

## Federal Benefit Programs

If a family member receives federal benefits, such as SSI, SSDI, or Medicare, these benefits will remain across state lines, however some benefits may go up or down. Once you have moved to VT you must file a change of address. You should contact social security before your move to let them know when you are moving, and to give your future address in VT.

Medicaid eligibility and services may vary from state to state. Contact [Vermont Health Connect](#) 855-899-9600 about transferring over Medicaid eligibility. The process of transferring Medicaid insurance from state to state can be confusing, so it may be very helpful to speak with a professional who can ensure a smooth transfer.

Contact VFN for more information and resources on accessing health care.

## Federal and State Programs

### Birth to 5

#### CIS

In Vermont, Early Intervention services is one part of Children's Integrated Services (CIS). If your child is under the age of three and currently receiving Early Intervention (EI) services, or you think they may qualify for EI services, contact the [CIS Coordinator](#) in the region to which you are moving to discuss transferring services or to make a referral.

In addition to Early Intervention services, [Children's Integrated Services](#) offers family support, and prevention services that help ensure the healthy development and well-being of children, pre-birth to age 5. Services are available at low or no cost to families.

### Birth to 21

#### CSHN and CDC

[Children with Special Health Needs](#) (CSHN) serves Vermont children and youth who have a chronic physical or developmental condition who also require health-related services above what children would generally require. CSHN Medical Social Workers can help families to apply for Personal Care Services, complete Medicaid paperwork, provide information, resources, and care coordination. CSHN is home to the Child Development Clinic (CDC). Young children through age 8 can receive a developmental evaluation when there is a concern for a developmental delay, cognitive disability, or autism. To make a referral to the CDC call 800-660-4427.

[Medical Homes](#) Families that have children with medical conditions may find that a medical home provides support, information and care coordination needed for managing complex conditions.

**WIC Nutrition Services** Before moving, contact your WIC office to let them know of your move and secure documentation detailing your participation in WIC. In Vermont, WIC is administered by the Department of Health. You will need to apply for WIC services in VT as you must be able to prove residency in VT, so have ready a lease agreement, rental contract, utility bill or VT driver's license. There are twelve [Local Health Offices](#). For questions or to call for an appointment contact [WIC@Vermont.gov](mailto:WIC@Vermont.gov) or 800-649-4357.

**Childcare Financial Assistance** To [qualify](#) for a childcare subsidy you must have an established service need and meet [income guidelines](#).

**Public Benefits** The Economic Services Division administers several public benefits that help Vermonters meet their basic needs. There are regional offices, an explanation of their programs, and on-line applications on the [Department for Children and Families](#) website.

**Guardianship** Once your child turns 18, they are considered an adult and are their own decision maker. If you have guardianship of your son or daughter keep in mind that guardianship is not portable across state lines. Information on guardianship and options to guardianship can be found [here](#). Search [Probate Courts](#) in the area/county to which you are moving for additional information.

### **Children's Hospitals**

The [University of Vermont Children's Hospital](#) is located in Burlington VT. If your child requires specialty care and you do not have a primary care physician (PCP) in VT, you can contact the Children's Specialty Center directly to set up a new patient appointment 802-847-8200. If you have a PCP, make a referral through them for the specialist your child will need. You will need to arrange to have medical records sent to your child's new doctors and specialists. Work with your current pediatrician to sign release of medical records so that your child's records can be sent. This may take time and there may be a fee involved. If your child needs care coordination, [Children with Special Health Needs](#) offers care coordination; they can be reached at 800-660-4427.

The [Children's Hospital at Dartmouth](#) (CHAD) is located in NH. Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, home to CHAD, serves many VT families that live in the bordering regions. [Molly's Place](#) is a nice place to start if you are looking for information, resources, and support.

### **Ages 3-21**

#### **Service Coordination**

If your child will need developmental or mental health services, service coordination or local planning, contact the [Designated Agency](#) (DA) in the county to which you are moving. Be sure to ask your child's pediatrician about a Medical Home approach to your child's care and whether there is a nurse care coordinator in the medical practice.

## **Speech, Physical, Behavioral or Occupational Therapy**

If your child is requiring these therapies in addition to what school or CIS-Early Intervention may provide, it might be most helpful to contact a Medical Social Worker at Children with Special Health Needs (CSHN) to find providers in the region you are moving to. Call CSHN at 800-660-4427

## **Schools and Special Education Services**

Special education services begin at age three for children who qualify for an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and supports and therapy services may continue through age 21, depending upon the child's diagnosis and needs.

- [The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)
- [Vermont Special Education Rules](#)
- [Guidance on VT Special Education Rules](#)
- [Individual Education Program Fact sheet](#)

Families should contact the Vermont school district where they plan to live in advance to plan for their child's transition. Families find it helpful to visit schools and talk with staff, if possible. The receiving school may opt to do an evaluation and will develop a new IEP. Until the new Vermont IEP is developed, the school will implement the old IEP to the best of their ability. Resources and programs can vary widely from state to state and even within VT so services and supports may look different.

## **Vermont Agency of Education Special Education Team**

Special Education Technical Assistance Line: 802-828-1256

Check out the list of [Family Resources for Special Education from the VT Agency of Education](#).

## **Section 504 Plan**

Section 504 plans provide accommodations for children who are not eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) but whose illness, physical or mental disability substantially limits one or more life activities, such as caring for oneself, seeing, breathing, learning, and walking. Students with asthma, diabetes, allergies, cerebral palsy, and other chronic health conditions may be eligible for a 504 plan. To learn more about these and other programs, contact Vermont Family Network.

- [Section 504 fact sheet](#)
- [Vermont Agency of Education 504 Manual](#)
- [Requirements under Section 504](#)

## **Mental Health**

Many children and adolescents have mental health challenges that affect their daily functioning. Parents can request a psychological or special education evaluation through your child's school. Your child may be eligible for an [Individualized Education Program](#) or a [Section 504 Plan](#). There are 12 [Designated Agencies](#) throughout the state that are responsible for providing supports within the area. Each one may provide different types of services. Every agency has a [24 hour emergency number](#).

**Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health 802-876-7021** The [Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health](#) exists to support families and children where a child or youth, age 0-22, is experiencing, or at risk to experience, emotional, behavioral, or mental health challenges. The Federation is committed to:

- Providing families with peer support and information in order to make informed decisions.
- Empowering families, youth and young adults to navigate service and support systems.
- Advocating for accessible, flexible and quality family centered and driven services on a local, state and national level.

The Federation collaborates with schools, communities, governmental, and private agencies, and other advocacy organizations to achieve these goals.

**NAMI- Vermont 800-639-6480**

[NAMI Vermont](#) is a statewide volunteer organization comprised of family members, friends, and individuals living with a mental illness. We have experienced the struggles and have joined together in membership to help ourselves and others by providing support, information, education, and advocacy.

**Resources**

Whenever you are looking for resources, please call VFN at 802-876-5315. Additionally, [VT-211](#) is a free information and referral resource available to Vermonters. You can call 211 directly or search their detailed database.